

**ERDC-Vicksburg**  
**Geotechnical and Structures Laboratory**  
**New Employee Orientation Packet**

Dear new employee,

Welcome to the Geotechnical and Structures Laboratory! We are pleased to have you on board. My name is Julie Baker, and I have been asked to compile some information and a list of contacts to make your first few weeks a little easier. We hope you will find this document useful, but we also encourage you to ask questions of people within your branch so that they can get to know you better.

Again, I am pleased to welcome you to ERDC and GSL, and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Julie Baker

Division Secretary/Office Administrator, Geosciences and Structures Division

## **Orientation and Training**

The first few days should be dedicated to getting oriented with your new job. As a new employee, you should be introduced to all of the other employees with whom you will interact on a daily basis and, then, to all of your superiors up to the Lab Director. Your branch chief should conduct you on a tour of the lab and introduce you to the technical directors, division chiefs, and all branch chiefs within the lab. In addition, a scheduled visit with the Director, Deputy Director, and your own division chief should occur within 3 weeks of the first day at work. Also, to introduce you to the entire lab, a digital photo will be taken of you with a short bio to distribute via email by the lab director to the entire lab within 2 weeks of duty.

ERDC and GSL are committed to supporting you in reaching your full potential. To help you define your career goals and develop a plan to achieve these, an Individual Development Plan (IDP) will be created for you. This plan should be a joint effort between you and your supervisors and will frequently be reviewed. It is a plan for you to obtain the training and development you need to grow in your new career.

## **Office Setup**

As a new employee, you should have an office, a phone with an active extension, and some furniture in the office designated to you. There should be a computer in the office as well. If this is not the case, talk to your branch chief for permission to set up an office, and inquire what furniture and equipment you may use. If a new computer was not supplied to you, you may be assigned a temporary one until a new one is ordered or supplied. Ask about ordering or locating office supplies if they are not given to you the first day. In addition to supplying your office with the necessary equipment for your work, you must setup your voice mail. Your branch office administrator can help you with whom you should contact to receive voice mail. Employees are responsible for the property assigned to them and their workplace. Each employee in his/her workplace should sign a hand-receipt.

## **Office Support**

For any office support issues (phones, keys, e-mail, training requests, travel requests, etc.), your first stop should be your branch office administrator.

## **USER-ID**

To use the network computer system, a request for USER-ID APPLICATION for your computer must be faxed to Ms. Sheneeka Hall of ITL (see numbers listed). She will notify you that the request has been approved. You will have to go to her office in Building 8000, Room 1102 to pick up the userid# and sign for the password. This must

be done in person. Once this userid # has been obtained, a “Request for CEFMS Access” can be put in. Sign this form and fax it to either Ms. Deborah Williams at ERDC-Vicksburg or Ms. Kim Ignasiak. Please include a cover sheet. Contact your branch office administrator for assistance if needed.

## **Ethics**

All Government employees are required to be familiar with the Department of Defense (DOD) ethics guidance on conflicts of interest, gifts, and outside activities. Your branch chief or supervisor should give you 5 CFR Part 2635 for primary guidance. In addition, you must complete an ethics-training course within **90 days** of your hire on date. Your branch chief or supervisor should arrange this for you.

## **Personnel Issues**

Ms. Rae Eikert (ext. 2707) is the GSL point of contact for personnel issues. She is the best source to determine where to find information on personnel benefits/issues. Her office is located on the fourth floor of Building 3996 (Casagrande Building) and her number is supplied under important numbers. ERDC benefits are under a centralized benefits service known as [Army Benefits Center \(ABC\)](#). ABC allows you to be self-sufficient in managing your Employee Health Benefits, Federal Employee Group Life Insurance, the Thrift Savings Plan, retirement, and survivor benefits. The Web site is included in the **Helpful Web Sites** section. You must call the toll free number or use the Web site to get your password/PIN. You will need your Social Security Number and a Personal Identification Number (PIN). Initially, your PIN will be your month and year of birth (MMYY), which you should change when you first access the system. It will take 2-3 days to receive your password.

## **Physical Security Program**

The Security Office staff is responsible for the physical security of the station. They are on duty 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. You may call upon them to provide support in any emergency situation that arises. Please report all suspicious activities to the security guards.

## **Security Badges**

In the first week, go to the Security Office and obtain your security badge. Some new employees have had problems receiving their badge because certain processes must be completed before getting it. One of the processes is getting an Army Knowledge Online email account. To get this account someone in your branch will have to sponsor you. Go to the [Army Knowledge](#) Web site listed in the **Helpful Web Sites** section, and sign up once you have been sponsored.

## Security Clearances and Investigations

As a new employee, you must complete a Standard Form 85 (SF85) for a national agency check for an employment suitability investigation. If necessary, you should fill out security clearance forms. You may contact the Security Office to obtain the necessary forms for obtaining security clearance. Before any foreign national may work or visit ERDC Vicksburg site, approval must be given by the Security Office. The approval process can take as long as 30 days.

## GSL Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures for the lab should be supplied to you, along with a lab roster. (Information also available from [GSL Intranet](#). See GSL [Standing Operating Procedure](#) and [GSL Roster](#).) These items should supply you with the needed numbers and information to apply for the travel and purchase cards. If not, ask your branch office administrator whom to contact to receive the forms.

## Pay Issues

When applying for direct deposit you must have an open account at a bank. If you choose to use Mutual Credit Union you will have to give the bank proof of your employment. The proof can come from you branch chief in the form of a letter or from a security badge. Another pay issue that you will discover once you begin working is that it will be almost 4 weeks after you started working before you receive your first paycheck. This is because your pay for the first two weeks is “held,” and you will be paid for the **next** two weeks. You will get a check every two weeks after that. If you choose to terminate your position, 2 weeks later you will still receive a check.

## Federal Employee Insurance Programs

Many different insurance plans exist for you as a federal employee. All information for this section was extracted from the [Federal Employees Health Benefits Web site](#) listed in the *Helpful Web Sites* section. Four of these programs are summarized below.

[Federal Employees’ Group Life Insurance \(FEGLI\)](#) – The Federal Employees’ Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program is the largest group life insurance program in the world, covering over 4 million Federal employees and retirees, along with their family members.

[Federal Employees’ Health Benefits Program \(FEHB\)](#) – Provides health insurance benefits to over 8 million Federal enrollees and dependents.

[Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program \(FLTCIP\)](#) – This program provides an important benefit that can help pay long term care expenses you may incur in the future. Over 20 million members of the Federal Family, including Federal and

Postal employees and annuitants, members and retired members of the uniformed services, and qualified relatives can apply for this type of insurance.

[Flexible Spending Accounts \(FSA\)](#) – this plan enables eligible employees to pay for certain benefits with pre-tax dollars.

Under the [Federal Employee's Health Benefits Program \(FEHB\)](#), as a new employee, you have **60 days** in which to complete an election either to enroll in a plan or not. Your employing office must remind you of the 60-day deadline and ensure that you make your election in a reasonable amount of time. If you do not make an election to sign up, you are considered to have declined your offered coverage.

Your enrollments will become effective on the **FIRST** day of the **FIRST** pay period that begins **AFTER** your employing office receives your enrollment request and that follows a pay period during any part of which you were in pay status. In other words, the earliest that your health insurance can become effective is the beginning of the pay period that begins after the pay period in which you were hired. That means you should not cancel your current health plans until this time for doctor visits or emergencies.

Under the [Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program \(FEGLI\)](#), your basic life insurance coverage is effective on the first day you enter in a pay and duty status unless you waive this coverage. You may waive Basic coverage at any time; however, it will not become effective until the end of the last day of the pay period in which you human resources office reaches it. More information can be found on the FEGLI Web site in the *Helpful Web Sites* section or clicking on the link above.

Click on the link to learn about the [Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program \(FLTCIP\)](#) or go to the *Helpful Web Sites* section. You can sign up for this even if you do not enroll in FEHB.

## **Health Benefit Issues**

A problem new employees have had is getting their health insurance properly processed. The recommended way to submit your Health Benefits Election Form (SF 2809) is through the Internet. People who have submitted this way have had better results. If you submit your form in any other way be aware that deductions can be taken out of your paycheck while the insurance company does not “officially” cover you. (As I explained in the last section.) This is because the insurance company has not received your information from the government agency handling your insurance.

## **Thrift Savings Issues**

Under the [Thrift Savings Plan \(TSP\)](#), as a new Federal employee, you will need to make a decision of how much you want to designate to the TSP, and how you want to

invest it. This program is a retirement savings plan both for civilians and uniformed service members. Please see the [Thrift Savings Web site](#) for more information.

A Human Resources (HR) person told one new employee that she was unable to start depositing money into the Thrift Saving Plan until open season, but this is untrue. You can open an account within the first 60 days of employment even if it is not open season. Also, if you have a life-changing event (like getting married) you don't have to wait until open season to make changes.

## **Federal Leave Programs**

To apply for leave and manage your leave effectively, download the [OPM 71, Request for Leave or Approved Absence](#) by clicking on the link or locate it in the *Helpful Web Sites* section. Use the Office of Personnel Management Web site to learn more about your leave options.

Annual leave is designed to give you vacations for rest and relaxation, personal business, or family needs. Your leave must be scheduled and approved in advance. All employees earn 4 hours of sick leave each pay period. You cannot accrue sick leave in pay periods where leave without pay or absence without leave reaches 80 hours.

## **Flexible Work Schedules**

ERDC offers different work schedules for you to choose from. They must be discussed with and approved by your supervisor. Core hours are the hours you are required to be at work, and flexible hours are the hours in which you can vary your schedule for lunch, arrival, and departure times. Credit hours are hours worked in excess of the basic work requirement, approved by your supervisor, and later used to shorten another workday. The core hours are typically 8 hours. You may come in to work anytime from 7 am until 9 am and leave 8 hours later anytime from 3:30 pm until 5:30 pm. You are given a 30-minute lunch and two 15-minute breaks every day. You may wish to work a compressed work schedule. Two types are offered:

The 5-4-9, working eight 9-hour days, one 8-hour day, and taking one regularly scheduled day off every other week.

The 4-10, working four 10-hour days and taking a regularly scheduled day off every week.

There are very specific rules covering work schedules and credit hours; this was just an overview.

## **Paid Holidays**

You are given 10 paid Federal holidays each year. If one of these falls on a non-workday, the holiday will be observed on Monday if it falls on Sunday or on Friday if it

falls on Saturday. The paid holidays are New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday, President's day, Memorial Day, Independence Day/July 4, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

## **Sign-in/Sign-out Policies**

The sign-in/sign-out policies vary from group to group. Sign in and out policies should be explained the first day.

## **Places to Help You Along the Way**

- The Information and Technology Laboratory (ITL) provides a range of support services including communications, computer systems, library, visual information, and publishing.
- The Library provides you with trained information professionals and worldwide information access. They have vast electronic networks. They will provide you with on-line database searches, reference and in-depth research services, current awareness services, inter-library loans, and article reprints.
- Visual Information includes a full range of VI services from graphics and design, to photography and videography, to presentations and prints. They can provide you slide, viewgraph, or fully electronic presentations; illustrations; computer-aided drafting; film or digital photography; studio photography; full-service video creation; exhibit design and exhibit rental; large format poster printing and laminating; creation of special awards and pieces; computer animation, narration, signage; and audiovisual support.
- Publishing and technology transfer services will support you with technical editing, management of the ERDC publishing program, layout, technology transfer support, and web, CD, and print publishing including distribution list maintenance and electronic notification. The ITL technology transfer/publishing contact Jessica Ruff. Word processing for GSL is done by Cheri Loden. Their numbers are listed in the ***Helpful Phone Numbers*** section.
- The Logistics Directorate (LOG Team) provides you with support through management of supplies and property, safe and efficient travel, timely movement of equipment for field activities, and maintenance of the vehicle fleet.
- The Supply Team covers acquisition, maintenance, accountability, and disposal of Government-obtained supplies and equipment.



- The Travel Team consists of Carlson Wagonlit. They will help you by processing travel requests and travel orders and arrange airline and rail reservations, rental car reservations, and if requested, hotel reservations. They are vital in overseeing and processing requests for passports, visas, and country clearances and authorize all travel orders. They can provide you with current information on the status of government travel, per diem costs, travel regulation updates, and permanent change of station orders. Their number and Web site are included in the ***Helpful Phone Numbers*** section.

[Rachael Cook](#) is our contact for Federal Employee Travel. Please contact her for any questions regarding travel, especially travel overseas. She is your contact for obtaining a government-issued passport. Her number is included in the ***Helpful Phone Numbers*** section.

- Financial Services is under the Directorate of Resource Management (DRM). If you are granted access to the Corps of Engineers Financial Management System (CEFMS) based on your duties and responsibilities, your supervisor will request specific access authority for you from the DRM Systems Division. The DRM also issues official Government travel credit cards. If you travel two or more times per year, you are considered a frequent traveler and must have a card for official travel expenses. Applications will be approved and given by your supervisor or through the DRM to the Bank of America for issuance of a credit card.

## Helpful Web Sites:

### *ERDC Information*

<https://erdcinfo.erd.usace.army.mil>

### *Army Knowledge Website*

[https://www.us.army.mil/portal/portal\\_home.jhtml](https://www.us.army.mil/portal/portal_home.jhtml)

### *New Employee Orientation*

<https://erdcinfo.erd.usace.army.mil/orientation/>

### *Army Benefits Center (ABC)*

<https://www.abc.army.mil>

### *Federal Employees Health Benefits*

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/>

### *Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB)*

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/handbook/fehb00.htm>

### *Federal Employees Group Life Insurance*

[www.hrsc.osd.mil/fegli.htm](http://www.hrsc.osd.mil/fegli.htm)

### *Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program (FEGLI)*

<http://www.ltcfed.com/>

### *Retirement*

[www.opm.gov/asd/htm/pub.htm](http://www.opm.gov/asd/htm/pub.htm)

### *Social Security*

<http://www.ssa.gov/>

### *Thrift Savings Plan*

<http://www.tsp.gov/>

### *OPM 71, Request for Leave or Approved Absence*

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/formindx.htm>

### *Mentoring*

<https://erdcinfo.erd.usace.army.mil/mentoring/ipt/index.htm>

### *Consideration of Others*

<https://erdcinfo.erd.usace.army.mil/training/consideration.htm>

### *CorpsPath*

<https://erdcinfo.erd.usace.army.mil/corpspath/index.htm>

### *Sabre Virtually There (to obtain your itinerary for travel)*

<https://www.virtuallythere.com/>

### *Rental Car regulations*

<http://www.usace.army.mil/inlet/usace-docs/eng-reg/er55-1-2/toc.htm>

### *CONUS per diem rates, base lodging information, current rates per mile*

<https://erdcinfo.erd.usace.army.mil/lm/travel/index.htm>

### *Defense Finance and Accounting*

#### *Service—My Pay*

<http://www.dfas.mil/mypay/>

### *GSL Internet*

<http://gsl.erd.usace.army.mil/>

### *GSL Extranet*

<https://gsl-mil.erd.usace.army.mil/>

### *GSL Intranet*

<https://gslinfo.erd.usace.army.mil/>

## Helpful Phone Numbers:

Dial the last four digits for on-station calls, 9 + the full number for local calls, and 88+ the area code and full number for long distance calls.

*Army Benefits Center (ABC)*  
1-877-276-9287

*Security Office*  
601-634-2124

*Travel Questions*  
Rachael Cook  
2378

*Director, GSL*  
David Pittman  
2204

*Carson Wagonlit Travel*  
601-638-8536, -8564  
1-800-468-2863  
Leisure travel (\$30 fee)

*Rae Eikert*  
GSL Management Support Group  
2707

*Lodging Success Program (LSP)*  
1-800-GO-ARMY-1 (1-800-462-7691)

*Human Resources*  
Mary Logan  
4480; 631-5870

*Request for USER-ID*  
Sheneeka Hall  
3467  
Fax 4482

*Tech Transfer/Publications Specialist*  
Jessica Ruff  
2587

*Request for CEFMS Access*  
Deborah Williams  
4266  
Fax 4278

*Word Processing*  
Cheri Loden  
4042

*Request for CEFMS Access*  
Kim Ignasiak  
217-373-6787  
Fax 217-373-6707

*ITL Help Desk*  
4401

*ERDC Library*  
2355 / 2543

*Waterways Toll Free*  
1-800-LAB-6WES

*ITL Multimedia & Desktop Publishing*  
Bobby Baylot  
2531

*Emergency*  
3333

## Commonly Used Acronyms

<b>A</b> ▲	<b>ABC</b>	Army Benefits Center
	<b>ADP</b>	Automated data processing
	<b>AEP</b>	Affirmative Employment Plan
	<b>AOC</b>	Army Operations Center
<b>B</b> ▲	<b>BRAC</b>	Base Realignment and Closing
<b>C</b> ▲	<b>CERL</b>	Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (officially "ERDC-Champaign, IL")
	<b>CERS</b>	Civilian Employee Retirement System
	<b>CFO</b>	Chief financial officer
	<b>CFR</b>	Code of Federal Regulations
	<b>CHL</b>	Coastal and Hydraulics Laboratory (officially "ERDC-Vicksburg, MS")
	<b>CMC</b>	Crisis Management Center
	<b>COR</b>	Contracting Officer Representative
	<b>CPAC</b>	Civilian Personnel Advisory Center
	<b>CRREL</b>	Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (officially "ERDC-Hanover, NH")
	<b>CSR</b>	Customer Service Representative
<b>D</b> ▲	<b>CT</b>	Central Time
	<b>DA</b>	Department of the Army
	<b>DRM</b>	Directorate of Resource Management
	<b>DOD</b>	Department of Defense
<b>E</b> ▲	<b>EAP</b>	Employee Assistance Program
	<b>EEO</b>	Equal Employment Opportunity
	<b>EL</b>	Environmental Laboratory (officially "ERDC-Vicksburg, MS")
	<b>ERDC</b>	Engineer Research and Development Center
	<b>ET</b>	Eastern Time
<b>F</b> ▲	<b>FAO</b>	Federal Approving Officer
	<b>FAR</b>	Federal Acquisition Regulations
	<b>FEGLI</b>	Federal Employees Group Life Insurance
	<b>FEHB</b>	Federal Employees Health Benefits
	<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency
	<b>FERS</b>	Federal Employees Retirement System
	<b>FEW</b>	Federally Employed Women, Inc.
	<b>FWP</b>	Federal Women's Program
<b>G</b> ▲	<b>GAO</b>	General Accounting Office
	<b>GSA</b>	Government Services Agency
	<b>GSL</b>	Geotechnical and Structures Laboratory (officially "ERDC-Vicksburg, MS")
<b>H</b> ▲	<b>HQUSACE</b>	Headquarters, United States Army Corps of Engineers
	<b>HPCMP</b>	High Performance Computing Modernization Program

## Commonly Used Acronyms (Continued)

<b>I</b> ▲	<b>IDP</b>	Individual Development Plan
	<b>IM</b>	Information management
	<b>IRS</b>	Internal Revenue Service
	<b>ITL</b>	Information Technology Laboratory
<b>J</b> ▲	<b>JTPA</b>	Job Training Partnership Act
<b>K</b> ▲		
<b>L</b> ▲	<b>LOG</b>	Logistics Directorate
<b>M</b> ▲	<b>MAC</b>	Mapping and Analysis Center
	<b>MSCA</b>	Military Support to Civilian Authority
	<b>MT</b>	Mountain Time
<b>N</b> ▲	<b>NASA</b>	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
	<b>NECC</b>	National Emergency Coordination Center
	<b>NIST</b>	National Institute of Standards and Technology
	<b>NOAA</b>	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
	<b>NRT</b>	National Response Team
	<b>NSA</b>	National Security Agency
	<b>NSC</b>	National Security Council
	<b>NSF</b>	National Science Foundation
	<b>NTSP</b>	National Telecommunications Support Plan
	<b>NWS</b>	National Weather Service
<b>O</b> ▲	<b>OFM</b>	Office of Financial Management
	<b>OMB</b>	Office of Management and Budget
	<b>OSC</b>	Operations Support Center
	<b>OSHA</b>	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
	<b>OSTP</b>	Office of Science and Technical Policy
	<b>OTTO</b>	Office of Technology Transfer and Outreach
<b>P</b> ▲	<b>OWCP</b>	Office of Workers' Compensation Program
	<b>PCS</b>	Permanent Change of Station
	<b>PI</b>	Principal investigator
	<b>PIN</b>	Personal identification number
	<b>POA</b>	Point of arrival
	<b>POD</b>	Point of departure
	<b>POE</b>	Point of entry
	<b>PT</b>	Pacific Time

## Commonly Used Acronyms (Concluded)

**Q** ▲

**R** ▲

**R & D**  
**RMA**

Research and development  
Risk Management Agency

**S** ▲

**SCIF**  
**SEMO**  
**SF**  
**SRC**  
**SSN**

Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility  
Safety and Environmental Management Office  
Standard Form  
Shared Resource Center  
Social Security number

**T** ▲

**TDY**  
**TEC**  
**TSP**

Temporary duty (aka "Travel/Off-Site Work")  
Topographic Engineering Center (officially "ERDC-Alexandria, VA")  
Thrift Savings Plan

**U** ▲

**USACE**

United States Army Corps of Engineers

**V** ▲

**VI**  
**VIP**

Visual Information  
Very important person (high-level visitor)

**W** ▲

**WES**

Waterways Experiment Station (officially "ERDC-Vicksburg, MS")

**X** ▲

**Y** ▲

**Z** ▲

## Other Links of Interest and Acronyms

[United States Army Corps of Engineers \(USACE\)](#)

[Engineer Research and Development Center \(ERDC\)](#)

### **ERDC Laboratories**

[Coastal and Hydraulics Laboratory \(CHL\)](#), aka ERDC-Vicksburg, MS

[Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory \(CRREL\)](#),  
aka ERDC-Hanover, NH

[Construction Engineering Research Laboratory \(CERL\)](#),  
aka ERDC-Champaign, IL

[Environmental Laboratory \(EL\)](#), aka ERDC-Vicksburg, MS

**Geotechnical and Structures Laboratory (GSL)**, aka ERDC-Vicksburg, MS

- [Internet](#) (public-access)
- [Extranet](#) (limited/military-user access)
- [Intranet](#) (ERDC-only access)

[Information Technology Laboratory \(ITL\)](#), aka ERDC-Vicksburg, MS

[Topographic Engineering Center \(TEC\)](#), aka ERDC-Alexandria, VA



